

City Council Meeting Date: March 5, 2019

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: Teresa Jensen, Library & IT Director

..Title

Fine Forgiveness during National Library Week, April 7-13, 2019.

..Body

Action Requested:

The Northfield City Council consider approving the attached Resolution for the forgiveness of library overdue fines at the Northfield Public Library during National Library Week of April 7-13, 2019.

Summary Report:

In fall 2018, the possibility of eliminating overdue fines at the Northfield Public Library, after the idea came news from the St. Paul Public Library that overdue fines would no longer be charged. It was decided to initially take an incremental approach to library fines with a week of fine forgiveness for library patrons, similar to a fine forgiveness initiative undertaken in October of 2018 for teens who had overdue fines. For teens, ultimately \$430.65 were forgiven during October, out of a possible \$3,434.29 in teen overdue fines.

It was determined that National Library Week would be an advantageous opportunity to conduct the fine forgiveness initiative, and that positive public relations would result for the library and for the City. Library staff recommend using an incremental approach for fine forgiveness—i.e., fine forgiveness for one week, rather than the elimination all library fines, as the library budget as now written depends on money from fines and fees as a part of its annual revenue. Prior to National Library Week, library staff will create a PR campaign to publicize fine forgiveness week to maximize the number of patrons responding. Library patrons could contact the library in person, by phone or via email regarding fine forgiveness. Fine forgiveness only applies to overdue items that have been returned.

Alternative Options:

The City Council can choose to not approve this one-time week of fine forgiveness.

Financial Impacts:

The dollar amount of outstanding fines from overdues totals approximately \$50,000; this number is arrived at through our Horizon circulation system, and is not a part of the library budget. Given the response from teens, we could expect that a total of \$2,000-\$5,000 might be forgiven in this time period.

Currently, the library revenue line for fines and fees equals \$30,000 per year; actual fines collected were \$14,555 in 2018, \$18,963 in 2017, \$17,915 in 2016, and \$17,754 in 2015. This

includes both overdue fines and fees for lost or damaged items. We are not proposing that fees for lost or damaged items be forgiven.

Tentative Timelines:

Fine forgiveness would happen between April 7-13, 2019.